

CULTURAL PLANNING CONTEXT IN SAN ANTONIO

The Demographic Context

San Antonio Has a Large and Unusually Diverse Population

With a population of 1,144,646 in 2000, San Antonio is the eighth largest city in the nation, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Moreover, the city is growing rapidly, having increased in population by nearly 15% between 1990 and 2000. San Antonio is also one of the most diverse cities in America, with 59% Hispanic or Latino, 32% White/non-Hispanic, 7% African-American, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander and 1% Native American. Twelve percent of the population is foreign-born.

Implication for cultural planning: With a diverse multicultural citizenry, San Antonio needs a diverse cultural services delivery system that takes into account the fact that persons of different cultures may have differing ways of experiencing arts and culture.

San Antonio Has a Relatively Young Population

Persons under the age of 5 comprise 8% of the population. Twenty-nine percent are under the age of 18. Only 10% of the citizenry are over 65. While 77% of the citizens are high school graduates, only 23% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Implication for cultural planning: Numerous studies have demonstrated that the greatest predictor of adult participation in the arts is exposure to the arts as a child. With arts education having been largely eliminated in the public schools in Texas and elsewhere in the nation, it has fallen to the nonprofit cultural sector to provide this arts education and exposure. Indeed, according to *The Arts*

Dynamic: A Survey of Arts Education in San Antonio Area Schools for the 1999-2000 School Year, San Antonio's arts and cultural organizations provided services to more than 150,000 kindergarten through 12th grade students in the 1999-2000 school year. San Antonio must redouble its efforts to reintroduce the arts back into the school curriculum.

"Arts are a way of telling the story of what happens in the community. Too often, poor people are portrayed negatively. In Human Services, the arts can also express vision and hope for the future."
Community Initiatives Director

San Antonio Has an Economically Disadvantaged Population

Median household money income in 1999 was just \$38,238, while fully 16% of the citizenry have incomes below the federal poverty level. The home ownership rate is relatively high, at 61% (2000), but the median value of owner-occupied units is just \$74,100. According to the U.S.

Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2000, San Antonio ranked 19th in per capita personal income among 20 cities with comparable demographics.

Implication for cultural planning: With many citizens possessing modest household incomes, widespread arts participation may be dependent upon the availability of free or low-cost arts activities. This may be one reason that festivals and outdoor events have been so successful. It will also be important that a range of family-oriented cultural activities be available in San Antonio.

The Cultural Environment

San Antonio Has a History of Arts and Cultural Studies and Planning

San Antonio has developed a number of relevant studies and plans prior to The Cultural Collaborative that represent a sustained effort to identify and address the community's cultural needs. In many cases, the previous work identified similar issues to those addressed in TCC and TCC has built on this accumulated knowledge, utilizing it to focus and inform the planning effort.

"We must not reinforce bad land-use planning that takes people out of the city and into the suburbs."

Business executive

1988 Blue Ribbon Committee on the Arts

This report, delivered at the request of then-Mayor Henry Cisneros, examined the current role of the City of San Antonio in delivering arts and cultural services to the citizens. It made six priority recommendations: 1) Create a Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs headed by a professional arts administrator; 2) Complete a written cultural plan; 3) Dedicate a source of public revenue; 4) Strengthen the Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee; 5) Complete necessary improvements at Lila Cockrell Theater and Beethoven Hall; and 6) Support culturally diverse participation on boards and staffs, programming and audiences.

1991 Economic Impact Report on the Arts in San Antonio

This study reported that nonprofit cultural organizations had an overall economic impact in San Antonio of \$596 million in the 1990-91 budget year. Over 1.5 million people attended nonprofit cultural events during that year, including dance, theater, music performances, special events and art exhibitions. Of these 1.5 million attendees, 41% were offered free of charge. Nonprofit arts organizations subsidized 615,000 admissions. San Antonio's nonprofit organizations, as a whole, were one of the city's largest employers, with nearly 700 full- and part-time employees. The annual economic impact of visitors' arts-related spending on total expenditures in San Antonio was more than \$445 million.

1993 Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs Strategic Plan

This plan, developed internally, identified seven priority goals, to: 1) Maintain and develop arts funding; 2) Implement initiatives to expand arts audiences; 3) Facilitate increased public dialogue on timely cultural issues; 4) Lead efforts, city-wide, to make the arts basic to education; 5) Shape a long-term cultural facilities plan; 6) Initiate and further international cultural exchange ventures; and 7) Continue development of governance, systems and structure for the Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs.

1995 San Antonio Arts Participation Survey

This report, based on a telephone survey of 400 San Antonio citizens, made several key findings: 1) San Antonio compares favorably to other cities of similar size in terms of arts participation; 2) Different market profiles of various segments of the population suggest different marketing challenges for local arts and cultural organizations; 3) Universal understanding of the value of the arts for children is a “communication entry point” even for people who do not relate to the arts; 4) Price sensitivity is a major issue for San Antonio arts consumers – more so for current attendees and less so for non-attendees; 5) Learning about other cultures is a strong value among adults; 6) San Antonio adults broadly recognize the social value of the arts and believe that the city should support local arts and cultural organizations; and 7) Respondents indicated a strong preference that new information services and ticket distribution methods should be used.

2001 The Arts Dynamic: A Survey of Arts Education in San Antonio Area Schools for the 1999-2000 School Year

This study by the San Antonio Arts in Education Task Force received survey responses for 19 local arts organizations. The data revealed that arts organizations offered predominantly free arts instruction and arts appreciation to every public school district in Bexar County, as well as to 136 private schools. San Antonio arts organizations’ programs served 150,000 K-12 students in 1999-2000. This represents more than half of the 255,634 students enrolled in public schools that year. Fine arts experiences occurred in some of the 13 San Antonio public school districts, but not in all, and not consistently. Music was the art form with the most specialists. Dance and theatre had the fewest teachers. Though visual arts instruction was at its highest levels (60%) at the elementary grades, there were questions about the overall consistency of the instruction.

“...it’s tough. Advocacy is needed. There is an attitude of benign neglect now. Teachers, parents and principals don’t understand the benefits of arts education. Many immigrant parents don’t speak up.”

Arts Education Focus Group participant

2002 Arts Programming Survey

In Fall 2002, the Office of Cultural Affairs surveyed 115 local arts and cultural organizations (67 responded) to determine: 1) Current and desired programming levels, including funding sources

and program priorities; 2) Obstacles inhibiting new program development and successful fundraising; 3) Use of city-owned facilities for office space, performances and exhibitions; and 4) Need for technical and management training/assistance programs. Some of the key findings include: 1) only 27% of responding organizations are housed in city-owned facilities; 2) only 41% of respondents own their own facility; 3) Many responding groups reported direct collaborations with organizations, particularly educational institutions; 4) New program plans were being developed in the areas of support for individual artists, cultural exchange, cultural tourism and marketing initiatives; 5) Lack of funding was cited as the major obstacle in developing new programs, along with lack of staff; 6) 37 organizations had budgets of less than \$100,000, 20 had budgets between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000 and 10 had budgets more than \$1,000,000; 7) Most organizations cited lack of staff and lack of time as major obstacles to successful fundraising; 8) 63% of organizations reported that they have no staff dedicated specifically to fundraising; and 9) Most organizations identified audience development/outreach and information technology as their most pressing technical assistance needs.

2003 Finding Ways: A Conference on Art, Culture & Economic Development in San Antonio

This conference was attended by more than 450 people who represented a cross-section of the city, with an emphasis on arts, culture and business. The purpose of the conference was to kick-off the effort to develop The Cultural Collaborative, engaging the community in a dialogue and beginning the collaboration necessary to implement the strategies. One of the primary focuses of the conference was to explore the interconnectedness of arts, culture and creativity to economic development. Six specific challenges to local cultural development were noted:

"The challenge for [my company] is hiring enough qualified creative people. We are adding 12 per month at three times the average San Antonio salary. Better arts and culture, and better places, make it more attractive for potential employees."

Creative business executive

1. Exhausted funding sources. Mirroring a nationwide phenomenon, funding for the arts in San Antonio is down from every source – earned income and contributed income from corporations, foundations and individual patrons, as well as public sector subsidies. San Antonio is particularly challenged on several levels. It has few local corporate headquarters where business support might be garnered. It also has few sizeable foundations and none at which the arts are a primary funding priority. The city also presents a challenge. It, like many American cities, has a structural shortfall in its General Fund budget and tax revenues have not kept pace with growing demand for public services.

Implication for cultural planning: In order to ensure long-term stability of the city's nonprofit cultural organizations, the city must seek a new dedicated revenue stream to support the arts. Several major American cities (St. Louis, Denver, and Salt Lake

City) have met this challenge by developing a cultural funding district supported by either property taxes or sales taxes.

2. Inadequate mix of facilities and resources. While the need for new cultural facilities did not emerge as the highest priority during the planning process, many planning participants noted the growing deferred maintenance in existing cultural facilities. Because of the city's budget problems, preventive maintenance on city-owned cultural facilities has been neglected in favor of providing basic public services to the citizens.

Implication for cultural planning: The city should develop a program to address the deferred maintenance of its cultural facilities and should explore a program to give matching grants for maintenance of cultural facilities not owned by the city.

3. Undercapitalized nonprofit organizations: Few, if any of San Antonio's nonprofit organizations, have financial resources that would constitute adequate capitalization. According to the National Arts Stabilization Fund, a nonprofit cultural organization is considered to be adequately capitalized if it has 50% of its annual operating budget in a cash flow reserve and enough endowment to generate 5% of its annual operating expenditures.

Implication for cultural planning: The long-term solution to this challenge is not readily apparent. While several cities have successfully created stabilization funds, many more have failed. Given the relatively modest resources in the corporate and foundation realms in San Antonio, it is highly doubtful that a stabilization effort would succeed.

4. Lack of communication among the cultural sector: As the Wolf, Keens & Co. preplanning study noted, the cultural sector is fragmented. It observed that city residents do not experience the arts in their neighborhoods and that, instead, the arts are focused in the downtown area. It noted that the arts and culture are not integrated into public education, which creates a disconnect for young people. It also noted that there was little effort to share audience information.

Implication for cultural planning: Nonprofit cultural organizations have historically been reticent to share audience information. This comes from the erroneous notion that audiences represent a zero-sum pool, where the choice to patronize one cultural organization necessarily means that another does not get patronized. In the cities where cultural organizations have pooled their marketing information, there is a net increase in overall cultural attendance. This may suggest that a new approach to shared marketing might find fertile ground in San Antonio.

5. Lack of awareness about activities in the cultural sector:

The TCC public opinion survey indicates a general lack of awareness in the community about the availability of arts and cultural programs in San Antonio. While many citizens reported attending a festival or public celebration one or more times each year, much smaller numbers were reported to have attended a performance or exhibition each year. When asked about ways San Antonio's arts environment and cultural life could be made better, the most frequent response was "more advertising, marketing or publicity." It was noted by many planning participants that the attention of the local print media to the arts is minimal.

"These are the elements that would help foster a 'sense of place' in San Antonio:

- *Downtown planning for residents first, tourists second*
- *Developing a broader reach of existing cultural assets*
- *Support for cultural entrepreneurs*
- *Long- and short-term investment in recreational resources*
- *Marketing San Antonio's authenticity"*

Creative business executive

Implication for cultural planning: It is an unfortunate phenomenon that when nonprofit cultural organizations feel a budget squeeze, one of the first areas to be cut is the marketing budget. While that may seem counterintuitive, the reality is that cultural organizations generally have high fixed costs associated with personnel, facility maintenance and production costs. Marketing, in many cases, is one of the few discretionary costs that can be managed.

6. *Lack of awareness about the importance of the arts to education, revitalization, economic development and cultural tourism:* It is only in the past few years that cities around the nation have come to realize that the arts play a vital role in many non-arts sectors. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the arts can significantly improve general educational achievement. Cities are realizing that the development of new cultural facilities and arts programming can be the catalyst to start the revitalization of blighted neighborhoods. Communities have begun promoting cultural development as a powerful economic development tool, as cities compete for creative and talented persons and enterprises. And cities like San Antonio, where tourism is one of the most significant industries, have learned that the cultural tourist stays longer and spends more than the average tourist.

Implication for cultural planning: These realities suggest that the cultural sector in San Antonio must develop new strategic partnerships to leverage its scarce resources for maximum impact. Partnerships should be forged with the educational system, the visitor industry, the chambers of commerce and the neighborhood associations.

2003 Cultural Pre-planning Report

This study, by Wolf, Keens & Co., assessed San Antonio's preparedness for a cultural plan. Several key observations were made: 1) Existing support of arts and culture provides a solid foundation; 2) Nonprofit cultural organizations are under-capitalized; 3) The commercial cultural sector in San Antonio is strong; 4) There is a lack of recognition of the cultural sector in San Antonio; 5) The cultural sector is fragmented; 6) There is a shortage of reliable data on the cultural sector; 7) The current mix of cultural facilities is inadequate; 8) There is potential for a significantly more effective cultural sector; and 9) Public sector funding comes primarily from a single source.

San Antonio's History of City Support

Since the 1970s, the City of San Antonio has provided funding and support for the arts; at first, arts funding came directly from the City Council to individual arts organizations. In an effort to depoliticize the process, the Arts Council of San Antonio was formed as a 501(c)(3) organization to receive funds from the City's General Fund and then re-grant them to other organizations. In time, the Arts Council was dissolved and in 1984-85, the funding process was pulled back into the city as a "Cultural Arts Program" within the Department of Parks and Recreation, still funded from the General Fund. The program was advised by the Cultural Arts Board, comprised of 11 members, each representing a City Council District, and a mayor's appointee.

In 1987, then-mayor Henry Cisneros established a Blue Ribbon Committee to study the state of the arts in San Antonio. Their report made two key recommendations. The first was that arts and cultural programming was vital to the citizens of San Antonio and deserved to be addressed by a Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs on an equal footing with other city departments. Secondly, the report recognized that arts and cultural institutions along with their collections and events were key reasons visitors chose to come to San Antonio. Therefore, since tourism was at that time the second largest industry, it would be appropriate to provide funding to these organizations from the Hotel/Motel tax to the extent allowable by law.

Accordingly, in 1989, the City Council approved the establishment of the Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs as an independent department of the city and established the Hotel/Motel tax as the source of its funding. Although the name of the Department changed to the Office of Cultural Affairs in 1997, the organizational structure and funding sources have remained the same.

The Office of Cultural Affairs currently has a budget of \$3.3 million, or about \$2.50 per capita, derived from approximately 7% of Hotel/Motel tax (Texas state law allows up to 15% to be allocated to the arts). This compares to a national average of about \$5 per capita for the 50 largest cities. In 2002, San Antonio spent \$2.78 per capita on the arts and culture, while Dallas spent \$11.92, Austin spent \$7.97 and Houston spent \$4.33.

Comparative Status of San Antonio

In the year 2000, the City of Atlanta commissioned the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University to do a comparative study of the state of the arts in 20 American cities. San Antonio was among those cities, which included Baltimore, Charlotte, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Miami, Phoenix, San Diego, San Jose and Seattle, among others. Their report, entitled *The Arts in 20 Cities: Where Does Atlanta Stand*, contains much information useful to San Antonio.

San Antonio has Fewer, Smaller Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations

In 1997, according to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, San Antonio ranked 19th among the 20 cities in the number of arts nonprofits, with 90. That compares to 801 for Boston (#1) or 311 for Dallas (#4). San Antonio ranked 18th in the number of arts nonprofits per capita.

According to the same source, San Antonio also ranked 18th in total revenues of arts nonprofits per capita. In earned revenues of arts nonprofits per capital, San Antonio ranked 20th and in contributed revenues, it ranked 18th. In average profitability per arts nonprofit organization, San Antonio fared somewhat better, in 12th place.

San Antonio Relies More on Public Dollars

San Antonio's cultural organizations rely very heavily upon public subsidies. These subsidies as a percentage of total revenue (unearned revenues divided by total revenues), at 6%, placed San Antonio with the 4th highest ranking.

The study examined the number of accredited institutions of higher learning in the arts: art schools, dance schools, theater schools and music schools. San Antonio ranked 16th, with five: four music schools and one art school.

San Antonio ranked 8th among art museums per capita, with nine. It ranked 6th among the 20 cities in the number of performing arts seats per one thousand residents, with eight seats.

Looking at just the eight southern cities in the study, San Antonio ranked 7th in total revenues of arts nonprofits per capital, 8th in donated revenues to arts nonprofits per capital and 7th in the number of nonprofit arts organizations per million inhabitants.

The study cited "Places Rated Almanac," which covers many lifestyle, economic, institutional and environmental factors, including the arts. San Antonio ranked 139th among the 300 cities evaluated on arts and cultural criteria. A similar report by *Money Magazine*, "Best Place to Live," ranked San Antonio at 168th among cities on arts and cultural criteria.

Political Realities

During the planning process, the consultant team met with every member of the City Council, as well as the Mayor and the City Manager. While many of the Council members had specific agendas relating to their districts, each expressed strong support for the arts and culture in San Antonio and an awareness of the vital role that arts and cultural programming plays in the life of the city. There was a general awareness of the fact that San Antonio lags behind comparable cities in the level of local public support of the arts and culture. However, the consultant team was reminded on numerous occasions about the challenges the city faces in providing for basic public services for the citizens of San Antonio. It was noted that the city has not had a general tax increase in more than a decade. The passage of the transportation initiative in 2004 was cited as evidence that the people of San Antonio, while generally averse to tax increases, will respond to well-articulated campaigns related to compelling community needs. The recently completed TCC opinion survey offers evidence that support for the arts and culture may be viewed as a compelling community need. When asked whether the “city government should spend more in support of the arts and cultural events,” on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being strongly disagree, 7 being strongly agree) 63% responded with a 5 or higher, with 31% responding with a 7. Similarly, more than 60% agreed that “more of the city budget should be provided to enhance development of arts and cultural activities in San Antonio.” Finally, when asked the likelihood that they would “support an additional \$5 per year in taxes” to support the arts, 73% agreed that they would support the increase.

The other notable political reality is the nature of city government. The City Council members represent 10 separate council districts. Only the Mayor is elected by the city at large. This district representation means that each Council member must attend, first and foremost, to the narrow concerns of his or her own district. This, by its nature, discourages focus on citywide issues, such as arts and cultural development. Another factor is the length of Council terms and term limits. Council members are limited to two two-year terms. This, in turn, encourages short-term thinking and planning. It also means that there is the possibility, every two years, of a major turnover in the elected leadership of the city.

Implications for cultural planning. The implementation of San Antonio’s cultural plan will require dedicated and sustained advocacy on the part of the cultural constituency. To be effective, advocacy on behalf of TCC and other cultural issues will need to be unified and disciplined. This level of advocacy will be necessary to provide support to elected officials who will champion cultural issues, and to “make the case” to voters for ballot initiatives.

